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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANJUL 000779

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DAKAR PLS PASS RAO, ODC, AND DAO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/29/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [GA](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: SHAKING UP THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE
AGENCY

REF: BANJUL 712 ET AL (NOTAL)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

HOUSE CLEANING BY NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL

¶1. (C) Reftel reported the November appointment of Pa Jallow as Director General of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), which had been in turmoil since the abortive coup plot here in March and the resulting detention of then-Director General Daba Marena. (NOTE: The GOTG subsequently claimed that Marena had escaped from custody; his whereabouts remain unknown, amidst belief in some quarters that he was secretly executed. END NOTE) Jallow, who most recently served as High Commissioner (Ambassador) to Nigeria but has previous NIA service, wasted no time in taking charge, as he promptly dismissed 34 NIA officials for poor performance. Our sources indicate that further dismissals may well be in the offing as Jallow continues his review of NIA operations.

RELEASE OF DETAINEES

¶2. (C) Jallow's initial acts also include the recent release of 24 detainees, an initiative that NIA sources portrayed to the media as part of his effort to improve the NIA's standing with the public. A reliable journalistic source stated that none of those released were suspected of involvement in the abortive coup plot or other "political crimes," describing them as "ordinary citizens" picked up for "illegal forestry practices," such as poaching and unauthorized cutting of trees for firewood. He added that some of the 24 had been held without charge for several months or longer -- far beyond the legal limit of 72 hours. Several contacts, noting Jallow's reputation for professionalism and respect for the law, expressed hope to us that he will work to curtail authorities' all-too-frequent practice of prolonged detention without charge.

COMMENT

¶3. (C) Whatever the new NIA head's interest in enhancing the NIA's public standing and curtailing excessively lengthy detentions, Jallow will doubtless be under heavy pressure from President Jammeh to improve NIA's reporting to him on possible dissidents, particularly in the military. We were reliably told that it was Jammeh's dissatisfaction with the NIA's performance on this score that led to the sacking of Jallow's predecessor. And, as one source put it, "if Jallow has to choose between keeping his job and upholding respect for detainees' rights, he will be compelled to select the former option." We plan to meet soon with Jallow and will

probe on his efforts to reform the NIA and its practices as well as on another key bilateral concern -- the NIA's cooperation on counterterrorism. END COMMENT.
STAFFORD